ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION: Comparing Note Taking and Test Performance in Methods and Modes of Note Taking Conditions

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Note taking is a common and effective practice among college students to support learning during lectures. Generally, there are two justifications for perceived benefits from note taking: the encoding function and the external storage function. Through the encoding function of note taking, the actual act of note taking helps students improve their mastery of the presented content through deeper processing. The external storage function of note taking is proposed to promote outcomes by enabling the learner to access the presented material at a later time to support long term retention (e.g., prior to test taking). The current study focuses on the encoding aspect of note taking by examining the note taking behaviors and outcomes for learners in a simulated lecture setting assigned to different note taking conditions.

Although note taking can be an effective means of supporting learning from lectures, many students are poor note takers and do not fully benefit from the note taking process. Prior research examining note taking success has demonstrated that both variations in the methods (e.g., guided vs self generated notes) and modes (e.g., handwritten vs computer) of note taking can be instrumental in learner performance.

Guided notes are lecture outlines that are given to students before the lecture and provide supportive structure to highlight key points in the provided lecture. The more traditional self-generated note method requires students to develop their own notes and can be subject to great variability due to individual differences in note taking skill. The current study aimed to clarify prior mixed results by contrasting learners' note taking behaviors and performance outcomes when employing varying methods (guided and self-generated) and modes (handwritten and typed) of note taking.

The results indicated that there was no significant impact on test performance related to note taking method. That is, no differences were noted in test scores for students in the guided, self-generated, or control conditions. Furthermore, students in the guided and self-generated conditions did not significantly differ in the quantity of notes taken. However, note taking mode did have a significant influence on test performance and note quantity. Students in the handwritten notes condition outperformed students in the typed notes condition on multiple choice items. Conversely, students who typed notes generated a significantly greater quantity of notes than those in the handwritten notes condition.